

BOOK REVIEWS

LE PENSEE DE RABINDRANATH TAGORE, by Sushil Chandra Mitter. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve. 1930.

After a brief preface by Dr Sylvain Lévi, who finds in Tagore one of the two guiding voices of India in travail, and a full bibliography of four pages, Professor Mitter proceeds to trace the sources of the poet's thought, and then to discuss what he calls his "transcendental humanism." In spite of his protest the poet's admirers insist that he is also a philosopher.

This discussion, the latter half of the book, is the more original, but the first half is equally useful to all who need such a summary. Professor Mitter is well-qualified by birth, training, and occupation to make it, and he gives us a clear and sympathetic account of Tagore's sensitive childhood, of the influence of his father, the Maharshi, of his adolescent promise, and of his brilliant achievements as educator, poet, and thinker. The Upanishads, the Bhakti singers of Bengal, Buddhism, and the songs of the people have all entered into the soul of this eclectic thinker; but it is to Kabir, the weaver-poet and to Rammohun Roy the synthetist that Tagore owes most. A son of the Brahma Samaj he has sung as no one in our time the praises of the Unseen Lover, and in this devotional dualism Dr Mitter finds his distinctive thought.

In the poet's *Jīvandevatā*, "Lord of My Life," he sees a new doctrine of the Self. Agreeing with Bergson that this world is a process of things, Tagore, more poet than philosopher, sees in the calm and peace of personal communion the proof that here is an abiding reality.

Tagore's "philosophy" expresses itself in many ways, perhaps best in his *Asram Santiniketan*, Abode of Peace. Here is a practical expression of his Reality: and if it breaks down in his own tendency to criticise without accepting criticism and in his failure to realise that internationalism

must be based on nationalism, this is because he is an intuitive rather than a systematic thinker.

In nationalism he sees the curse of our time and in the "big and complex" organisation of our civilisation the trademark of materialism.

The book concludes with a brief account of the poet's educational work, but unfortunately it has no index, and the reviewer is unable to check his impression that far too little attention is given to the influence of the West upon Tagore whose music, drama, educational theories, and philosophy have been more influenced than he knows by the "material" West. Nor is there enough consideration of the influence of Buddhism which inspires the Poet not only by its international spirit but by its central philosophic thought. The contrast between the unreal and the real, the transient and the permanent, the restless and the calm—it is this which the great thinkers and artists try to express, and it is this which Tagore has chosen as the central thought of his own mystical transcendentalism. But why drag in Bergson whom the Buddha anticipates by twenty-five centuries in making Nibbana the calm state of the one Abiding Reality?

Kenneth J. Saunders

THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM, by Sir Hari Singh Gour. Calcutta : Lal Chand & Sons; London : Luzac and Company. 8vo, pp. xxxi + 565. Price, 30s.

The beginning of the preface explains this work. It says, "The subject of this book has given rise to a voluminous literature in all the principal European languages. But all these works have been written by European scholars. It appeared to the present writer that there might still be room for a work compiled by one who, though not an orientalist, had yet lived in a system out of which Buddhism had grown and who, by reason of his remote kinship with the Great Master, might perhaps possess a mentality which may give

him in some small degree an advantage denied to alien writers, brought up under a different system and possessing a mentality, which has to be trained to the receptivity of ideas and the appreciation of a doctrine, the elements of which are familiar to all Hindus, and the depth of which can perhaps be more easily sounded by those to whose forefathers the doctrine was first preached and who, by their love and devotion to their great compatriot and kinsman, are not likely to forget easily its true meaning and significance." This is the reason for the book and the author states that he has followed the historical method, but in expounding the tenets of the new religion, he has attempted to summarise the then prevalent views of life and then give Buddha's comments and criticism upon them and the writer feels that a work following this method must necessarily be a singular departure from the beaten track hallowed by the tread of a century of orientalists and European expounders of oriental thought. As the writer declares it is intended to be popular, so it disarms criticism from a more scholarly point of view. The author gives an exposition of the life of the Buddha and the development of the doctrine and his views are indeed often contrary to those held by European scholars and he finds in Buddhism a higher teaching than is ordinarily presented. Buddha never truly denied the existence of God nor of the soul—he was not truly understood.

A comparison with other faiths is made, with Jainism, with Hinduism, with Christianity, with Islam, with modern thought, and a final chapter presents Buddhism as the universal religion. It should be classed as a world religion because it possesses none of the bigotry and nothing of the exclusiveness of sectarian creeds. It is tolerant of all creeds but only intolerant of their superstitions and absurd dogmas and offers a faith enlightened by reason and a convenient formula for uniting all intellectual forces on the ground of a common idealism.

In asserting that there is an esoteric doctrine in Bud-

dhism, the author is in line with Mahayana Buddhism especially with the Zen and Shingon sects of Japan. We agree with the statement: "Buddhism has always had an esoteric side; and that side places Buddhist metaphysics in a plane higher and nobler than the base materialism to which it is held associated. That higher teaching will not be readily perceived by any one who reads only what Buddha spoke in his popular discourses to the uninitiated.—That Buddhism has for over two thousand years engrossed the best minds of the East and has materially influenced Western thought—shows that there must be in the plain narrative of his doctrine an elasticity and a hidden meaning which only a closer study of his teaching can reveal." This chapter is of much interest but we could wish that the author knew more of the Mahayana so that he might stress here the ideal of the Bodhisattva which is the gem of the higher Buddhist doctrine.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN VEDANTISM, by Mahendranath Sircar, M.A., Ph. D. Pub. by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. Pp. xii+314. Price, 10 Rs.

In India philosophy has never been divorced from life and religion, and religion has often been deeply tinged with intellectual subtleties. That the highly abstract advaita Vedantism of Śankāra is contrasted to the concrete devotional Vishnu worship of Rāmānuja may appear strange, but both are really branches of one great Indian life-tree.

Buddhism does not acknowledge the authority of the Śruti, and in this respect it does not belong to the orthodox Indian way of thinking. But it harbours also in its own body two divergent systems of discipline—the highly metaphysical Śūnyatā teaching and the devotionism of the Pure Land faith. When the two extremes are taken up for comparison, they seem to differ so much, indeed, that one doubts whether they belong to the same system. Shin Buddhism

and the Vishnu worship being analogous to Christianity in so many points, they may all be considered to be of one common origin; but after all the Shin is an offshoot of Japanese Buddhism and the Vaishnavas are the Indian followers of the Bhakti wing of Vedantism; they cannot grow out of Christianity, which is the product of the religious consciousness of the Israelites. Though religion is life everywhere, this life asserts itself in different forms under different surroundings. This is why there are varieties of religious expressions and yet so many points of mutual correspondence.

“Vedāntism,” it is rightly remarked by the author of the *Comparative Studies in Vedāntism*, “is as much an art of life as a science of thinking, and life ultimately in its fullness of growth embraces Truth and finds its meaning and purpose therein. And it will not be wrong to say that Vedāntic systems are ultimately attitudes of life and consciousness, which subsequently find out a logical support and basis. Though the later teachers are found engrossed in working at the concepts, yet these concepts are formed and woven out of a demand to meet the requirement of the particular attitude of consciousness. And in the history of Vedāntism two attitudes of knowledge and love have almost become fixed, and the psychological demands have given two types of philosophical concepts and thinking.”

What Dr Sircar attempts to do in his book before us is “to indicate the fundamental concepts of Vedāntism, a comparative study in the different lines of thinking of these problems. I have, therefore, before me the two types of thought—Transcendentalism of the Advaitins and Theism of the Vaishnavas. Among Vaishnava teachers I have attempted to throw light on the systems of Rāmānuja, Vallabha, Madhva, Nimvark, and the Bengal school. Though the main profession of Vaishnava Vedanta has been theistic, yet the Vaishnava teachers have minor differences amongst themselves, and the cast of Vaishnavic thought has different

moulds to suit the minor differences in logic." The subjects treated here for comparative studies are: Epistemological Approach, Categories of Existence, Appearance, An Estimate, The Creative Order, Sources of Knowledge, and Realisation and Discipline.

The doctrine of grace is the weightiest one in all the religious systems founded upon the experience of salvation. Whether salvation is monergistic or synergistic, whether it is *Tariki* (other-power) or *Jiriki* (self-power), may be left to philosophers to discuss and give a final solution to the problem. According to Dr Sircar, "Vaishnavism counts upon grace as the immediate cause of liberation from the divided life consequent on association of the soul with nature. Grace sheds forth kindly light and loving attraction which carries the struggling soul up to the fulness of life and light. But before the soul can feel the touch of grace and receive it, it is to be absolutely purified and resigned. Karma gives this purity of being, resignation, and humility. In lowliness and humility the spirit receives grace. The Vedāntists accept the ever-presence and ever-expansiveness of grace, still they maintain that grace is vouchsafed unto the spiritually fit. The importance of karma and self-discipline has been emphasised in this affirmation. Mercy bestows its genial protection and upward stirring to every struggling consciousness, but the virtuous and the meritorious alone are fit to receive them. The unrighteous cannot receive them by the grossness of their nature. Even in cases when the flow of divine mercy has an unprecedented swiftness, the heart must have been pure, the spirit lowly, and the intellect in tune with the synthetic vision. Grace or mercy is consequent upon clarity of vision and lowliness of spirit. When the synthetic vision is in complete sight, the heart moves in the rhythm of the synthetic light and gradually begins to receive the loving touch and the protecting care of Mercy. Such a conception of mercy is not opposed to the self-effort and self-discipline." (P. 310.)

Against this, Shin Buddhism upholds absolute moner-gism. The comparative study of all these religious experi-ences in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, etc. and the philosophies which attempt to understand them intelligently will no doubt shed much light on the nature of the human soul.

On the whole, Dr. Sircar has handled his subject with lucidity and penetration.

THE SAUNDARANANDA OF AŚVAGHOṢA, Critically Edited with Notes by E. H. Johnston, M. A. Published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. Price 12/6. Pp. xi + 171.

We have now a critically edited text of Aśvaghōṣa's Saundarananda by Mr. E. H. Johnston, forming one of the Panjab University Oriental Publications. Besides the text itself there are notes carefully worked out and a good full index containing many Buddhist Sanskrit words which have not been noticed much in the dictionaries. The text, as the editor rightly remarks, has not been sufficiently studied by Buddhist scholars. But really "it is the earliest Buddhist work by a writer whose name is known to us and of whose personality we can gain some idea from his writings. So too it is the earliest work presenting to us a logical and carefully thought-out description of the path to Enlightenment. That the views set out are traditional makes it perhaps all the more valuable; for it enables us to see the force and bearing of technical terms and arguments, which are enunciated in earlier Buddhist literature in a manner liable to cause mis-conception. Further, as Aśvaghōṣa is generally agreed to have flourished early in the second century A.D., the indications he gives of developments in doctrine deserve considera-tion." (Pp. v-vi.)

This neglect on the part of Buddhists in the past was no doubt due to the inaccessibility of a good text of *The Saun-*

darananda, and we have to be grateful for Mr Johnston's painstaking work which amply supplies the deficiency.

BUDDHISTISCHE SYMBOLIK, with 68 plates in large octavo, by Gustav Mensching. Gotha: Leopold Klotz Verlag. Pp 52; price, 18 marks.

The author intends through this work to show the religious symbology of Buddhism by means of many illustrations. They have been taken mainly by the author's uncle, Dr Schubert. The work has an introduction on Buddhism and Buddhist symbology, and then explains the pictures which illustrate the following subjects: the general symbols of the teaching of Buddhism such as the Wheel of the Law and the stupa, the Buddha and his Order, showing statues of the Buddha and of the Arhats, the cult symbology with pictures of altars and their ornaments such as drums and bells, the architecture of temples, for example, stupas and pagodas, and animal symbols such as the lion, the elephant, and the deer. This is an extremely interesting and suggestive book.

THE REAL H. P. BLAVATSKY, a Study in Theosophy and a Memoir of a Great Soul, by William Kingsland. London: John M. Watkins. 8vo, pp. x+322. Price, 16s.

This book is a written endeavour to show how the Theosophical Movement started and to reveal the soul of the woman who was the central figure in the inception of that movement. The author states that "behind the rough, somewhat uncouth, stormy, and certainly most unconventional H. P. Blavatsky, there lay for those who could put aside superficial judgments, a nobility and force of character of the highest quality, so in using the term the *Real* H. P. Blavatsky I use the term first of all as correcting the false representations and misconceptions which have been so commonly and so lightly accepted by the world at large and

secondly as signifying what in fact each of us possesses—an inner Self, a real Self as distinguished from the fluctuating, changing personality; a Self which, in that majority of us, is only very feebly active in or through the temporary personality. Setting aside all carping criticism, let the reader try to look into the great heart of the woman whose clear gaze was fixed on the great goal of Humanity, the attainment by each individual of a divine degree of knowledge and wisdom and who worked with iron will and unswerving purpose and utter self-sacrifice if perchance a few might receive the great message entrusted to her by those custodians of the ancient Wisdom Religion when she herself had found after years of ceaseless search.”

There is no doubt whatever that the Theosophical Movement, made known to the general world, the main doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, and the interest now being taken in Mahayana in the Western world has most certainly been helped forward by the knowledge of Theosophy. Mr Evans Wentz in his *Tibetan Book of the Dead* writes, “The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdry was of opinion that there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author’s intimate acquaintance with the higher lamaistic teachings into which she claimed to have been initiated.” *The Voice of the Silence* is true Mahayana doctrine. Undoubtedly, Madame Blavatsky had in some way been initiated into the deeper side of Mahayana teaching and then gave out what she deemed wise to the Western world as theosophy. It is true that some things were added and some subtracted from the pure Mahayana doctrine according to the extent of her knowledge and her judgment. As Mr Kingsland says, “She did more than any other single individual to bring to the West a knowledge of Eastern religious philosophy.”

The author proceeds to record the life of Madame Blavatsky from her birth to her death, always with the idea of discovering the real individual under the superficial personality. It seems that he has done his task well.

CHRISTOS, the Religion of the Future, by William Kingsland.
 London: John M. Watkins. Demy 8vo, Pp. xi+123.
 Price, 2/6.

Religion, according to Mr Kingsland, is the effort of the individual to realise his innate spiritual nature and powers. He believes that even in the remotest past there was already a deeper knowledge, a real Gnosis which we are, in fact, only now beginning to recover. It is that ancient Gnosis which must be the religion of the future he thinks, and he hopes to show that all our scientific discoveries and our modern philosophical thinking tends to confirmation and re-statement of it.

It is interesting to find Buddhist parallels. On page 18, he gives the statements of Reality which exactly matches that of Zen when he asserts that to find reality, "the man must penetrate to the depth of his own being" and again "the finding of the true Self is a continual negation, perpetual loss of the phenomenal self."

On page 81, he gives the Buddhist standpoint when he declares that the cycle of birth and death is to be conquered through the attainment of a real spiritual consciousness, and on page 84, a definition of the True Self which is quite Mahayanistic. On page 96, he seems to affirm the Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana. This little book gives a good introduction to Mahayana Buddhism. For this reason, we recommend it to all those wishing to taste something of the Mahayana Wisdom.

GOTAMA THE MAN, by C. A. F. Rhys Davids. London; Luzac and Company. Demy 8vo, Pp. 302. Price, 4s.

This is a puzzling book. At the first reading the new ideas and irritating style created an unsympathetic judgment, but upon re-reading it and managing to put up with the strange English style, the general idea of the writer was caught and sympathised with.

It is indeed true that the man Gotama as well as the Buddha Gotama and his teaching have been so represented and misrepresented by both ancient and modern writers that "it is difficult now to get a true idea of either the man or his message and that he does not sanction the worth in which either he or his message is held to-day."

The author proceeds to write the life of the Buddha in the first person, and this presentation is quite different from the usual and orthodox one. For example, "It was not the facts of old age, sickness, death that were brought home to me, as if I had never known of them, as if I were a very babe in knowing of these things. It was the More-knowledge that the old man wanted, that the brahmans were scant in, more-knowledge in the longer life, more-knowledge in the things most needful here in our way-faring; it was the back of this that sent me home most woeful, most lacking light, most looking for a new world (p. 21)." And again, "Let no book ever word any other message as mine:—the worth in man as willer to will, to choose his own welfare," (p. 51); again, "I held the very 'man' in highest worth. That there was no 'I' was unthinkable. I did not seek man's body, I did not seek man's mind; I did not seek a bundle, a complex of both. I sought 'The Man', the very 'thee' (p. 63)." "Never did we doubt that 'I' the very man, was real (p. 65)." "The man in my word was the one thing most real, man who is neither body nor mind.... Here lies the very centre of my teaching:—the man as wayfarer (p. 86)."

The writer examines the various doctrines of the Buddha and re-interprets them. One must certainly agree with her when she asserts (p. 146), "There is perhaps no teaching that has been so fettered as is mine with the fixed formula, the fixed refrains." The Buddhism we know in the Pali Canon is the fixed Buddhism made by priests. As the writer says, "Not only were the fixed wordings not always worthy but changes came which were not for the better." In truth, the Buddhism of the Southern School in its sutras is the

record of one school only the Vibhajjavadin. There were the records of other schools but it was the Mahayana which sought to return to the real teaching of the Buddha, to get his true spirit. That they made mistakes too is certain, but they made fewer mistakes, and if they are accused of preventing the letter of the doctrine, they made a brave attempt to preserve its spirit. Mrs Rhys Davids' book is very suggestive along this line. She says, "They had only, each section of them, some sayings. None of them had a knowledge of all. Nor have they now, in countries where Buddhism is held. They know only portions." Let us add, in Europe also.

Although the writer's ideas and conclusions are not Mahayana, but quite independently characteristic of herself, often exaggerated, often far-fetched but also the clear thinking of a trained scholar. Yet she suggests what the Mahayanist felt when they turned from the monk-made school of the Vibhajjavadin to seek the true spirit of the Buddha's doctrine.

THE VISION OF KWANNON SAMA, by B. L. Broughton, M. A.
(Oxon.). London: Luzac and Company. Pp. 154.
Price, 5s.

This book, in story form, relates a legend, according to Chinese sources, of the origin of Kwanyin, the Chinese Bodhisattva of Mercy. It is difficult to understand why as the story is Chinese, the Japanese term Kwannon Sama should be used, and then the use of this term is popular, the true form used by priests being Kwanzeon Bosatu, Kwannon Sama being used only among the laity of less religious knowledge.

The story is a charming one and was composed by a Chinese priest: it was told to Mr Broughton by Chinese friends. The beauty of personality and character of the lovely Miao Shan is sympathetically related. The world of

compassion is contrasted with the world of force and Kwannon triumphs in the end as the ever-victorious Bodhi-sattva of Love and Compassion.

BUDDHISM, by Kenneth Saunders. Benn's Sixpenny Library, No. 58. Pp. 79.

This is a very small book outlining Buddhism. It is indeed Buddhism in a nutshell presented within a few pages. Anyone who reads this little book cannot fail to have his interest aroused in this great religion. The author says, "The student who would grasp at once the wide range of Buddhist developments and their inner unity may do so without great effort in two ways. He may either read typical texts in easily available translations, or he may study the art forms in which their essence is embodied," and he adds that "if the first step is to realise the complexity of Buddhism, the second is to trace the underlying unity. . . . The key to the understanding of Buddhism lies in the concept of balm in the midst of storm, of the Abiding in the midst of the transient, of the real at the heart of the unreal."

THE TANNISHO, Tract on Deploring the Heterodoxies, translated by Tosui Imadate. Kyoto: The Eastern Buddhist Society. 16mo, p. xxviii+51. Price, ¥1.00.

The *Tannisho* is considered a gem by the Jōdo-Shin sect and believed to contain its most important teaching. It was compiled by one of Shinran Shonin's immediate disciples, Yuiembo, who found that his master's teaching was variously interpreted, not always in the spirit of the master. He lamented the state of affairs and decided to write this booklet quoting some of the most important sayings of Shinran Shonin in order to put an end to the spreading of heterodoxies. It is supposed to present householder Buddhism the gist of which consists in believing in the "Original Vow" of Amitabha Buddha and the very spirit of the Buddha and

the essence of his teaching is understood to be revealed in the *Tannisho*. As the *Tannisho* itself says, "When the thought is awakened in your heart to say the Nembutsu, believing that your rebirth in the Pure Land is attained through the inconceivable power of Amida's Original Vow, you come to share in his grace which embraces all beings forsaking none." The reader who wishes to learn something of Shin Buddhism cannot do better than to peruse this little book.*

CHINESISCHE PHILOSOPHIE, by Heinrich Hackmann. München: Ernst Reinhardt. Pp. 406. Price, M. 9.00.

This is a noteworthy book which deals with Chinese philosophy from the earliest to modern times, describing in detail the main ideas of Confucius, Laotse, Metse, Chuangtse, Mencius, and then following with the development of Buddhism in China, the history of Mahayana, its great teachers and sutras, and then going on to Sung and modern Confucianism. The book shows rare learning and is a most necessary volume in the library of the student of Chinese philosophy.

* With great regret we report that the translator of the *Tannisho* died recently after this note had gone to the press.